

NCA
VOC FOR IOP/FN
BACKGROUNDER NO. 5-5700
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INDIA UNREST

ANNCR:

A SPATE OF RIOTS IN VARIOUS PARTS OF INDIA IN RECENT DAYS IS PROVOKING MUCH SOUL SEARCHING AMONG THOUGHTFUL INDIANS. VOA CORRESPONDENT FRED BROWN HAS THIS BACKGROUND REPORT. VOICE:

SOME OF THE WORST DISTURBANCES OCCURRED IN THE TWIN SOUTHERN CITIES OF HYDERABAD AND SEKUNDERABAD WHERE AT LEAST FOURTEEN PEOPLE DIED IN RIOTING TOUCHED OFF BY CHARGES OF POLICE BRUTALITY. ORDER WAS RESTORED ONLY AFTER A CURFEW WAS IMPOSED AND THE ARMY CALLED IN TO PATROL THE STREETS. A FEW DAYS EARLIER AN OUTBREAK OF VIOLENCE DID HEAVY DAMAGE IN THE CITY OF SAMBAHL IN UTTAR PRADESH AND LEFT SIXTEEN DEAD. THERE ALSO HAS BEEN RIOTING RECENTLY IN THE STATE OF BIHAR OVER GOVERNMENT PLANS TO RESERVE A CERTAIN PERCENTAGE OF PUBLIC JOBS FOR THE SO-CALLED BACKWARD CLASSES. AND INDIAN NEWSPAPERS OF LATE HAVE BEEN FILLED WITH REPORTS OF ALLEGED ATROCITIES COMMITTED AGAINST HARIJANS -- THAT IS THE SO CALLED UNTOUCHABLES WHO ARE AT THE BOTTOM OF INDIA'S CASTE SYSTEM.

WHILE THESE EVENTS WERE SPARKED BY DIFFERENT INDIVIDUAL CAUSES THERE SEEMS TO BE SOME ELEMENTS IN COMMON. A TEAM OF REPORTERS FROM THE TIMES OF INDIA THAT STUDIED THE RIOTING AT SAMBAHL SAID THE TROUBLE THERE WAS FANNED BY ANTI-SOCIAL ELEMENTS WHO DELIBERATELY SOUGHT TO EXPLOIT RELIGIOUS TENSIONS AND POCKETS OF DISCONTENT FOR POLITICAL PURPOSES. SIMILARLY THE RIOTING IN HYDERABAD ESCALATED SHARPLY AFTER OPPOSITION POLITICAL PARTIES CALLED A GENERAL STRIKE. IN CALLING THE STRIKE, THE TWO MAIN OPPOSITION GROUPS -- THE JANATA PARTY AND COMMUNIST PARTY MARXISTS -- IGNORED PROMISES BY THE STATE'S

CHIEF MINISTER DOCTOR CHENNA REDDY TO ORDER AN INQUIRY INTO THE ALLEGED POLICE BRUTALITY. ONLY AFTER ALMOST A WEEK OF TURMOIL DID THE OPPOSITION PARTIES AGREE ON MEASURES TO RESTORE PEACE AND NORMALCY. THE GOVERNMENT, FOR ITS PART, AGREED TO RELEASE ALL PERSONS ARRESTED UNDER PREVENTIVE MEASURES.

THE TROUBLES IN HYDERABAD, SAMBAHL, AND BIHAR HAVE TOUCHED OFF NUMEROUS DEMANDS FOR JUDICIAL INQUIRIES. COMMENTING EDITORIALY ON THESE DEMANDS THE TIMES OF INDIA QUESTIONED THE VALUE OF SUCH INQUIRIES, WHICH THE NEWSPAPER NOTED USUALLY TAKES YEARS TO COMPLETE. THE TIMES OF INDIA CALLED ON THE GOVERNMENT TO DEAL STERNLY WITH THOSE WHO IN THE WORDS OF THE EDITORIAL THINK NOTHING OF KILLING MEN, WOMEN AND CHILDREN MERELY BECAUSE THEY BELONG TO A DIFFERENT COMMUNITY. AT THE SAME TIME THE EDITORIAL SAID POLITICAL LEADERS MUST REFRAIN FROM PLAYING ON SUCH SENTIMENTS FOR WHATEVER TEMPORARY GAIN THEY HOPE TO ACHIEVE.

THE CURRENT UNREST BROUGHT A STRONG WARNING WEDNESDAY FROM A TOP OFFICIAL OF THE JANATA GOVERNMENT. DEFENSE MINISTER JAGJIVAN RAM EXPRESSED DEEP CONCERN OVER THE FEELING OF INSECURITY WHICH HE SAID HAS BEEN SPREADING THROUGHOUT THE COUNTRY. HAVING, AS HE PUT IT, SURVIVED THE PERILS OF THE EMERGENCY, MISTER RAM SAID INDIANS MUST NOT LET THEMSELVES DRIFT INTO A NEW DANGER -- UNREST. HE SAID IT WAS UP TO EVERY INDIAN TO DO HIS OR HER PART TO SEE THAT THIS DOES NOT HAPPEN.

JS/PY